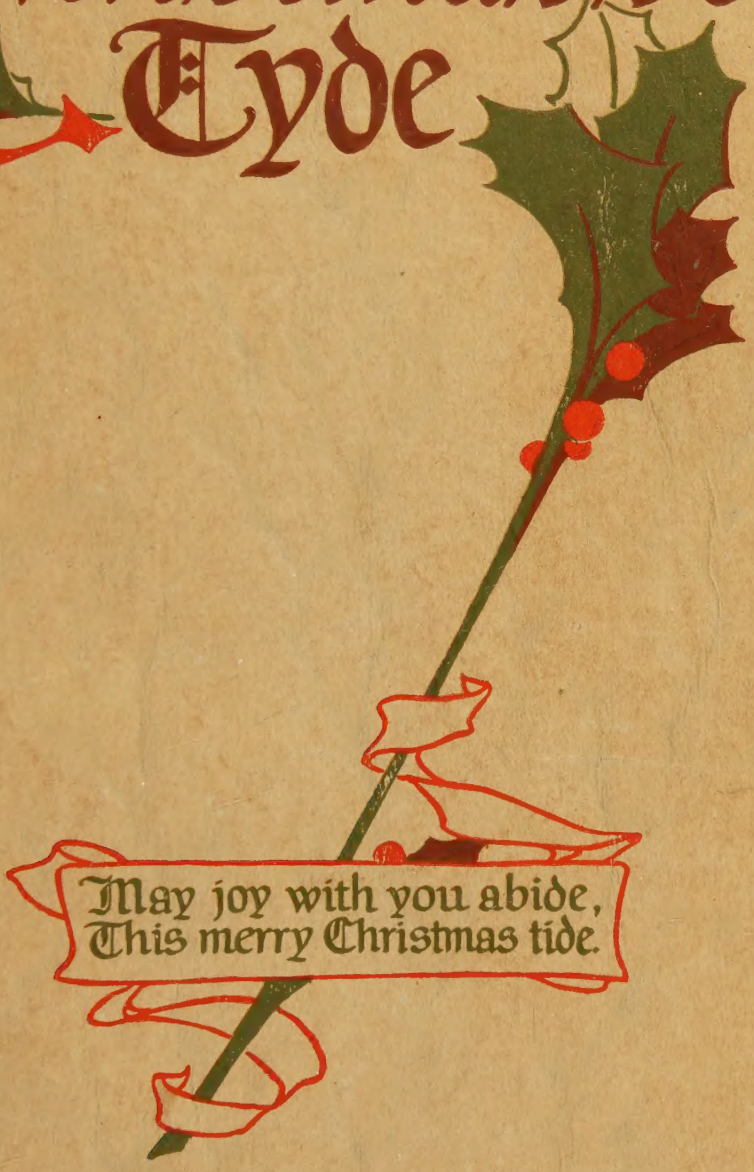
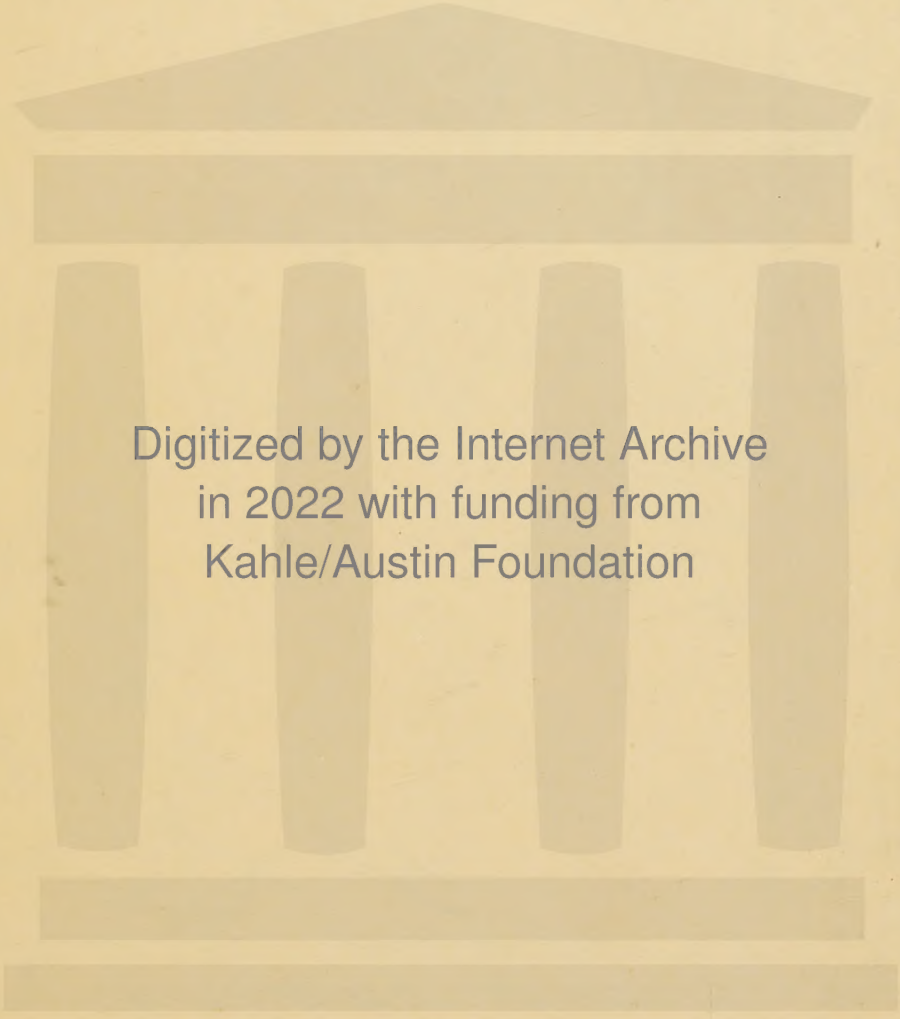
Christmasse Tyde





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GORDON
ROSS

Being a Collection of Seasonable Quotations

Chosen and Arranged by

Jennie Day Haines

"At Christmas, play and
make good cheer,
For Christmas comes but
once a year."

Paul Elder and Company
San Francisco and New York

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Greeting

"The twelve days of Christmas," embracing the period between Christmas Eve, December 24th, and Epiphany, or Twelfth Night, January 6th, is known as Christmas-tide. ¶ Great as the feast of Christmas is, nothing can be definitely traced as to its origin; nobody knows who first celebrated it, or when, or where, or how. ¶ We find that various communities of Christians kept the day on different dates, until about the middle of the fourth century when Pope Julius established the festival at Rome, on December 25th. ¶ The holidays of the year are the red-letter days of its calendar. Among them all, Christmas is unique, inasmuch as it brings universal joy and good-will. Let the nations, therefore, rejoice and be glad in the gift of the world's greatest life.

CHRISTMASSE TYDE

Ye Holly Branch and Ye Mistletoe Bough

When Rosemary and Bays, the poet's crown,
Are bawl'd in frequent cries through all the town,
Then judge the festival of Christmass near,—
Christmass, the joyous period of the year!
Now with bright Holly all the temples strow;
With Laurel green, and sacred Mistletoe.

John Gay.

CHRISTMAS TIDE

"Keep Christmas Green"

Again the trailing forest moss,
The laurel, cedar, fir and pine,
In green festoons,—with wreath and cross,
Around our walls and windows twine:
Within the pleasant lighted hall
Are holly boughs and berries seen,
Sweet summer memories to recall
And keep our ancient Christmas green.

Let Christmas bloom be thine and mine
With Love's fair banner all unfurled,
In memory of that Flower Divine
Whose heavenly fragrance fills the world!
Let all men Christmas gladness know,
Christmas cheer be ever seen;
Bring cross and garland from the snow,
And keep your merry Christmas green.

George Coles.

The mistletoe was regarded with the utmost veneration by the Druids, especially when it was found growing on the oak, the favorite tree of their divinity Tutanes.

At the period of the winter solstice, when a great festival was celebrated in his honor, the ancient Britons, accompanied by their priests, the Druids, went forth and gathered the mistletoe which was believed to possess wondrous curative powers. Divided into small portions, it was distributed among the people, who hung up the sprays over the entrances to their dwellings, as a propitiation and shelter to the sylvan deities during the season of frost and cold.

Selected.

CHRISTMAS TIDE

The mistletoe hung in the castle hall,
The holly branch shone on the old oak wall;
And the baron's retainers were blithe and gay,
And keeping their Christmas holiday.

Thomas Haynes Bayly.

Though early banished from the churches, mistletoe and the kissing under it flourished apace in the servant's halls at the Christmas period. "In the kitchen," says Brand, "it was hung up in great state, and whatever female chanced to stand under it, the young man present either had a right, or claimed one, of saluting her, and of plucking off a berry at each kiss;"—Washington Irving adds, that—"when the berries are all plucked, the privilege ceases."

According to Archbishop Nares, the maid who was not kissed under it, at Christmas, would not be married in that year. The mistletoe speedily invaded the drawing-room, without, however, reducing the quantity of kissing in the lower regions.

Selected.

Go ye to the forest, where the myrtles grow,
Where the pine and laurel bend beneath the snow;
Gather them for Jesus, wreathe them for His shrine,
Make His temple glorious with the box and pine.

Wreathe your Christmas garland where to Christ we pray;
It shall smell like Carmel on our festal day;
Libanus and Sharon shall not greener be
Than our holy chancel on Christ's nativity.

Arthur Cleveland Coxe.

Christmas Tide

"The Mystic Mistletoe"

It is because that prose is intertwined with poetry and mystery, it is because the mistletoe has become the center of more than one cycle of legendary and traditional lore, it is because it was connected with the heathen Saturnalia and was adopted into the Christian festivities which transformed the soulless license of the past into the pretty and harmless indecorum of the present,—it is for all these reasons that the very word "mistletoe" greets the fancy presently and appeals to the latent superstition and mysticism of even the best-balanced minds.

William S. Walsh.

The high regard in which holly was held is expressed in this old Saxon couplet:—

"Whosoever against holly do cry,
In a rope shall be hung full high.
Allelujah!"

And I say, May the green holly tree flourish, striking its roots deep into our English ground, and having its germinating qualities carried by the birds of heaven all over the world!

Charles Dickens.

But the mistletoe, the mystic mistletoe, where is the man whose school-boy days are gone by, in whom that word conjures up no merry memories?

"Oh, the mistletoe bough!" Who hath not at the name, thronging visions of sweet faces that looked sweetest in those moments of their startled beauty beneath the pendent bough.

Thomas K. Hervey.

And as, when all the summer trees are seen
So bright and green,
The holly leaves a sober hue display
Less bright than they,
But when the bare and wintry woods we see,
What then so cheerful as the holly tree?

Robert Southey.

Under the Holly Bough

Ye who have scorned each other,
Or injured friend or brother,
In this fast-fading year:
Ye who, by word or deed,
Have made a kind heart bleed,
Come gather here!
Let sinned against and sinning
Forget their strife's beginning,
And join in friendship now.
Be links no longer broken,
Be sweet forgiveness spoken
Under the holly bough.

Charles Mackay.

The early Christians gave an emblematic turn to the custom of decorating, referring to the "righteous branch," and justifying the custom from Isaiah lx: 13: "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary."

Selected.

Christmas Tide

"Oh! Holly Branch and Mistletoe"

Oh! holly branch and mistletoe,
And Christmas chimes where'er we go,
And stockings pinned up in a row!
These are thy gifts, December!

And if the year hath made thee old,
And silvered all thy locks of gold,
Thy heart has never been a-cold
Or known a fading ember.

The whole world is a Christmas tree,
And stars its many candles be.
O sing a carol joyfully
The year's great feast in keeping!

For once, on a December night,
An angel held a candle bright,
And led three wise men by its light
To where a child was sleeping.

Harriet F. Blodgett.

The holly, the holly, O twine it with bay,
Come give the holly a song;
For it helps to drive stern winter away,
With his garment so sombre and long!

Eliza Cook.

"Holly and Ivy, Box and Bay,
Put in the church on Christmas Day."

Fifteenth Century Carol.

At Christmas Time

At Christmas time the fields are white,
  And hill and valley all bedight
With snowy splendor, while on high
The black crows sail athwart the sky,
Mourning for summer days gone by
    At Christmas time.

At Christmas time the air is chill,
  And frozen lies the babbling rill;
While sobbingly the trees make moan
For leafy greenness once their own,
For blossoms dead and birdlings flown
    At Christmas time.

At Christmas time we deck the hall
  With holly branches brave and tall,
With sturdy pine and hemlock bright,
And in the Yule log's dancing light
We tell old tales of field and fight
    At Christmas time.

At Christmas time we pile the board
  With flesh and fruit and vintage stored,
And mid the laughter and the glow
We tread a measure soft and slow,
And kiss beneath the mistletoe
    At Christmas time.

O God, and Father of us all,
  List to Thy lowliest creature's call;
Give of Thy joy to high and low,
Comforting the sorrowing in their woe;

Make wars to cease and love to grow
At Christmas time.

Let not one heart be sad today,
May every child be glad and gay;
Bless Thou Thy children great and small,
In lowly hut or castle hall,
And may each soul keep festival
At Christmas time.

Selected.

Candlemas Day

Decorations remained in churches and dwellings till Candlemas Day (February 2d), when they must all be taken down, for people had superstitions about their remaining longer.

Yes, take the greenery away
That smiled to welcome Christmas Day,
Untwine the drooping ivy spray.

The holly leaves are dusty all,
Whose glossy darkness robed the wall,
And one by one the berries fall.

Take down the yew, for with a touch
The leaflets drop, as wearied much
With light and song, unused to such.

* * * * * * *

Another Christmas Day will show
Another green and scarlet glow,
A fresh array of mistletoe.

Frances R. Havergal.

Holly

Not one pretty flower would stay
  When old Autumn nipped the grass;
For she had a cruel way,
  Though as red-cheeked as a lass.
    Winter had our Northland taken,
    Her white flags by wind outshaken.

What then was there bright enough
  For the merry Christmas Day?
"Good Dame Nature, be less rough,"
  Said the folks, "leave storms, we pray;
    Bring some posies and be cheery,
    Lest she find the world too dreary."

"What are posies in the gleam
  Of my beautiful white frost?"
Said the old dame from her dream.
  "By the hedge all snow-embossed,
    Bloom itself the glad day carries,"
    And she held up holly berries.

How their scarlet brightness shone
  In the morning's airy tracks!
Nature is a wise old crone;
  She knows what a picture lacks.
    Winter lost its melancholy;
    Christmas laughed to see the holly.

Since that hour, now far away,
  When Time's tired wing was light,
In the path of Christmas Day
  Always shine the berries bright;

And 'mid all its tender folly
Gleams the blush of Christmas holly.

Susan Hartley.

"Heigh-ho the Holly"

As dreaming by the fire I sat,
  I heard a merry din,
The door I opened wide; at that
  A stranger child stepped in;
He wore a fleecy warm white hat
  Tied round his dimpled chin.

Green leaves and berries red he brought,
  His face and voice were jolly,
I have no flowers, but these I thought
  Would cure your melancholy,
I'll sing a song I've been taught—
  It's called, "Heigh-ho the Holly!"

Edith M. Thomas.

In the language of flowers, holly signifies foresight, and mistletoe means "I have surmounted all difficulties." Holly, as every one knows, is the symbol or sign of Christmas, but the custom of using it is older than Christianity. The Romans sent friendly greetings and sprigs of holly to one another during their winter festival. For this reason, perhaps, it was taken to stand for the Christmas spirit of love and good-will.

Selected.

Christmasse Eve

Holy night, a sudden flash of light its way is winging:
Angels, angels, all above, around;
Hark, the angel voices, hark, the angel voices singing:
And the sheep are lying on the ground.
Lo, all the wistful air, and earth, and sky,
Listen, listen to the gladness of the cry.

Holy night, thy solemn silence evermore enfoldeth
Angel songs and peace from God on high;
Holy night, thy Watcher still with faithful eye beholdeth
Wings that wave, and angel glory nigh.
Lo, hushed is strife in air, and earth, and sky,
Still thy watchers hear the gladness of the cry.

Edward Thring.

Christmas Eve in Ye Olden Tyme

On Christmas Eve the bells were rung,
On Christmas Eve the mass was sung:
That only night, in all the year,
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green:
Forth to the wood did merry men go,
To gather in the mistletoe.
Then opened wide the baron's hall
To vassal, tenant, serf and all:
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And ceremony doffed his pride.
The heir with roses in his shoes
That night might village partner choose:

* * * * * * *

The fire with well-dried logs supplied
Went roaring up the chimney wide;
The huge hall-table's oaken face,
Scrubbed till it shone, the day to grace,
Bore then upon its massive board
No mark to part the squire and lord.
Then was brought in the lusty brawn
By old blue-coated serving-man:
Then the grim boar's head frowned on high,
Crested with bay and rosemary.
Well can the green-garbed ranger tell
How, when and where the monster fell,
What dogs before his death he tore,
And all the baiting of the boar.
The wassail round, in good brown bowls,
Garnished with ribbons blithely trowls.

There the huge sirloin reeked; hard by
Plum porridge stood and Christmas pie;
Nor failed old Scotland to produce
At such high-tide her savoury goose.
Then came the merry masquers in
And carols roared with blithesome din;
If unmelodious was the song
It was a hearty note, and strong.

* * * * * * *

England was merry England when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale,
'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale;
A Christmas gambol oft would cheer
The poor man's heart through half the year.

Sir Walter Scott.

In the City

It was the day before Christmas, and even the Bowery, "the thieves' highway," had taken on the emblems and spirit of the season, and the young officer smiled grimly as he saw a hard-faced proprietor of a saloon directing the hanging of wreaths and crosses over the door of his palace and telling the assistant bar-keeper to make the red holly berries "show up" better.

The cheap lodging-houses had trailed the green over their illuminated transoms, and even on Mott Street the Chinamen had hung up strings of evergreen over the doors of the joss-house and the gambling-house next door. And the tramps and good-for-nothings, just back from the Island, had an animated, expectant look, as though something certainly was going to happen.

Richard Harding Davis.

CHRISTMAS TIDE

A Visit from St. Nicholas

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse:
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there:
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced through their heads:
And Mamma in her kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap,—
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon, on the breast of the new-fallen snow,
Gave a lustre of midday to objects below:
Then what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled and shouted and called them by name:
"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donder and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch, to the top of the wall!
Now, dash away, dash away, dash away all!"
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,
So, up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With a sleigh full of toys,—and St. Nicholas, too.
And then in a twinkling I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.

Christmas Tide

He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a pedlar just opening his pack.
His eyes how they twinkled! his dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry;
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow.
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath;
He had a broad face, and a little round belly
That shook, when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.
He was chubby and plump, — a right jolly old elf —
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself.
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.
He spoke not a word but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle;
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight:
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!"

Clement C. Moore.

A "Truly" Christmas Child

For five years she had heard, "'Twas the night before Christmas," and hung up a scarlet stocking many sizes too large for her, and pinned a sprig of holly on her little white night gown, to show Santa Claus that she was a "truly" Christmas

child, and dreamed of fur-coated saints and toy-packs and reindeer, and wished everybody a "Merry Christmas" before it was light in the morning, and lent every one of her new toys to the neighbor's children before noon, and eaten turkey and plum pudding and gone to bed at night in a trance of happiness at the day's pleasures.

Kate Douglas Wiggin.

A rush, a roar, a gleam, a glow;
A great procession and a show;
A blare, a shout, a rush, a rout;
A threading in, a thridding out;
A snatch of song, a merry word,
To tell a common joy has stirred
The common heart;
That's Christmas week on Chestnut Street.

Emma Sophie Stilwell.

A Child's Wish

Santa Claus, last Christmas Eve
I was happy as a King;
Little brother Paul and I
What treasures precious you would bring
We were wondering, Paul and I,
What treasures precious you would bring.
Santa Claus, dear Santa Claus,
Could you now bring back to me
Little brother Paul again,
Oh! how happy I should be!

Selected.

Santa Claus

He comes in the night! He comes in the night!
He softly, silently comes;
While the little brown heads on the pillows so white
Are dreaming of bugles and drums.
He cuts through the snow like a ship through the foam,
While the white flakes around him whirl;
Who tells him, I know not, but he findeth the home
Of each good little boy and girl.

Selected.

A Christmas Eve Thought

If Santa Claus should stumble
As he climbs the chimney tall,
With all this ice upon it
I'm 'fraid he'd get a fall
And smash himself to pieces —
To say nothing of the toys!
Dear me, what sorrow that would bring
To all the girls and boys!
So I am going to write a note
And pin it to the gate —
I'll write it large, so he can see,
No matter if it's late —
And say, "Dear Santa Claus, don't try
To climb the roof tonight,
But walk right in, the door's unlocked,
The nursery's on the right."

Harriet B. Sterling.

CHRISTMAS TIDE

"The Spirit of Christmas"

"* * * But don't you see that there is a Santa Claus! He isn't a man in a fur coat — and a reindeer sleigh and all that — but he is the spirit of Christmas, isn't he? They've personified that, and made a saint of him, and invented legends about him — for the children — but when we're no longer children, and don't believe in him, we still have that Christmas spirit — and it's that that gives presents and makes us feel kindly toward one another, and makes Christmas what it is."

Harvey J. O'Higgins.

"Quite Like a Stocking"

Just as the moon was fading
  Amid her misty rings
And every stocking was stuffed
  With childhood's precious things,
Old Kris Kringle looked around,
  And saw, on an elm-tree bough,
High hung, an oriole's nest
  Lonely and empty now.

"Quite a stocking," he laughed,
  "Hung up there on a tree!
I didn't suppose the birds
  Expected a present from me."
The old Kris Kringle, who loves
  A joke as well as the best,
Dropped a handful of snowflakes
  Into the oriole's empty nest.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich.

CHRISTMAS TIDE

The Birds' Christmas Dinner

A traveler in Sweden tells of a pretty custom: —

"Not a peasant will sit down with his children to a Christmas dinner, indoors, till he has first raised aloft a Christmas dinner for the little birds that live in the cold and snow without."

A Real Santa Claus

Santa Claus, I hang for you,
By the mantel, stockings two:
One for me and one to go
To another boy I know.

There's a chimney in the town
You have never traveled down.
Should you chance to enter there
You would find a room all bare:
Not a stocking could you spy,
Matter not how you might try:
And the shoes, you'd find are such
As no boy would care for much.
In a broken bed you'd see
Some one just about like me,
Dreaming of the pretty toys
Which you bring to other boys,
And to him a Christmas seems
Merry only in his dreams.
All he dreams then, Santa Claus,
Stuff the stocking with, because
When it's filled up to the brim
I'll be Santa Claus to him!

Frank Dempster Sherman.

CHRISTMASTIDE

A Christmas Song

Oh, Christmas is a jolly time
  When forests hang with snow,
And other forests bend with toys,
  And lordly Yule logs glow!

And Christmas is a solemn time
  Because, beneath the star,
The first great Christmas Gift was given
  To all men near and far.

But not alone at Christmas time
  Comes holiday and cheer,
For one who loves a little child
  Hath Christmas all the year.

Florence Evelyn Pratt.

Life still hath one romance that naught can bury
  Not Time himself, who coffins Life's romances.
  For still will Christmas gild the year's mischances,
If Childhood comes, as here, to make him merry.

Theodore Watts-Dunton.

Ye Yule Log

Out of the mighty Yule log came
The crooning of the lithe wood-flame,—
A single bar of music fraught
With cheerful yet half-pensive thought,—
A thought elusive: out of reach,
Yet trembling on the verge of speech.

William Hamilton Hayne.

Christmas Yule

A favorite Yule song, supposed to be of the time of Henry VI, is found in the Sloane manuscripts: —

Welcome be thou heavenly King,
Welcome born on this morning,
Welcome for whom we shall sing,
Welcome Yule.

Welcome be ye Stephen and John,
Welcome Innocents every one,
Welcome Thomas Martyr one,
Welcome Yule.

Welcome be ye, good New Year,
Welcome Twelfth Day, both in fere,
Welcome Saints, lovèd and dear,
Welcome Yule.

Welcome be ye, Candlemas,
Welcome be ye, Queen of Bliss,
Welcome both to more and less,
Welcome Yule.

Welcome be ye that are here,
Welcome all, and make good cheer,
Welcome all, another year,
Welcome Yule.

Bringing in the Yule Log

The burning of the Yule clog or log is an ancient Christmas ceremony handed down from the Scandinavians, who, at

their feast of Juul, at the time of the winter solstice, used to kindle huge bonfires in honor of their God, Thor.

* * * * * * *

The bringing in and placing of the ponderous block (frequently the rugged and grotesquely marked root of an oak) on the hearth of the wide chimney in the baronial hall was the most joyous of the ceremonies observed on Christmas Eve. It was drawn in triumph from its resting-place amid shouts and laughter, every wayfarer doffing his hat as it passed, for he well knew that it was full of good promises, and that its flame would burn out old wrongs and heart-burnings.

On its entrance into the baronial hall, the minstrels hailed it with song and music, or, in the absence of the minstrels, we are told that each member of the family sat upon it in turn, sang a Yule song, and drank to a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year: after which they had as part of their feast, Yule dough, or Yule cakes, on which were impressed the figure of the infant Jesus.

Selected.

As an accompaniment to the Yule log, a candle of monstrous size, called the Yule Candle, or Christmas Candle, shed its light on the festive board during the evening.

The Firing of the Yule Log

After the endless amusement afforded by the Yule games, the log was kindled to cheer up the hearts of the revellers and to defy the cold.

According to Herrick, the firing was accomplished from a

brand of the last year's log, which had been carefully laid aside for the purpose, and music was to be played during the ceremony of lighting: —

"With the last yeere's brand,
Light the new block, and
For good successe in his spending,
On your psaltries play,
That good luck may
Come while the log is a teending."

* * * * * * *

"Kindle the Christmas brand, and then
Till sunneset let it burne,
Which quencht, then lay it up agen,
Till Christmas next returne.

"Part must be kept, wherewith to teend
The Christmas log next yeere:
And where 'tis safely kept, the fiend
Can do no mischief there."

Selected.

Superstitions of Christmas Eve

The Yule log is still burnt in many farmhouses in England, particularly in the North, and there are several superstitions connected with it among the peasantry.

While it is burning, it is considered an ill omen if a squinting person come to the house, or one with bare feet: — but, above all, a flat-footed woman!

The log was to burn all night; if it went out, it was

regarded as a portent of bad luck; neither were its virtues to be extracted unless lighted by clean hands.

* * * * * * *

A halo of superstition seems also to surround Christmas Eve, and people liked to believe that at midnight the cattle in their stalls knelt in adoration, that bells were heard from under the earth, that bees hummed Christmas hymns in their hives, and that the cock crowed repeatedly during the night, for the purpose of scaring off evil spirits.

These well-known lines from Hamlet recognize these superstitions: —

> "Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes,
> Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
> The bird of dawning singeth all night long;
> And then, they say, no spirit can walk abroad;
> No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
> So hallowed and so gracious is that time."

"Smoulderin' en Smoulderin'"

"En de Yule log — dat faifful, knotty, tough ol' Black Jack — lay dar betwixt de two jambs, smoulderin' en smoulderin' wid hits heart true ter Christmas, darin' en defyin' all de flames er de bark en de splinters en de logs put tergedder, ter burn hit out, ef dey could, endurin' de time dat Christmas lasts. Fer de ol' Misses say dat dem sparks er de Yule log wuz de li'le splinters dat splint off de Star in de East dat time at Beflehem when all ter a sudden de Star come ter a stopstill ter show de Wise Men Him whar come ter sabe 'em. "En de ol' Yule log lays dar smoulderin' en smoulderin' all thoo de whole er de Christmas week ontwel de New Yeah, en shroudin' wid hits

white ashes his own great, roun', red, glowin' heart — dat heart er fire dat's allers true ter Christmas. En I kin shet my eyes en see fallin' swift en soft fum dat burnin' heart er de Yule log millions en millions er li'le white shrouds — Marse George ma say dey's de shrouds er de lost seconds er de ol' year gone forebber mo'."

La Salle Corbell Pickett.

An enormous log glowing and blazing and sending forth a vast volume of light and heat, * * * was the Yule clog, which the squire was particular in having brought in and illumined on a Christmas Eve, according to ancient custom.

Washington Irving.

Yule-Peace

The angels in the Gloria in Excelsis have probably given us the best definition of Christmas, — "On earth, peace, goodwill toward men." This Christian idea of Christmas, with its love, charity and forgiveness, has probably found its most striking realization in the Julafred, or Yule-peace of the Scandinavians — a custom, though ancient as the Runic stones, still existing in Sweden, by virtue of a Christian baptism, as a Christian institution.

Extending from Christmas Eve to Epiphany, and solemnly proclaimed by a public crier, any violation of the Yule-peace is visited with double or treble punishment. The courts are closed; old quarrels are adjusted; old feuds are forgotten; while on the Yule evening the shoes, great and small, of the entire household are set close together in a row, that during the coming year the family may live together in peace and harmony.

O. M. Spencer.

Ye Christmasse Waytes

Hush! hark! the waits far up the street!
A distant, ghostly charm unfolds,
Of magic music wild and sweet,
Anomes and clarigolds.

John Davidson.

CHRISTMAS STUDIA

The Waits

At the break of Christmas Day,
  Through the frosty starlight ringing,
Faint and sweet and far away
  Comes the sound of children, singing,
    Chanting, singing,
      "Cease to mourn,
      For Christ is born,
Peace and joy to all men bringing!"

Careless that the chill winds blow,
  Growing stronger, sweeter, clearer,
Noiseless foot-falls in the snow
  Bring the happy voices nearer.
    Hear them singing,
      "Winter's drear,
      But Christ is here,
    Mirth and gladness with Him bringing!"

"Merry Christmas!" hear them say,
  As the East is growing lighter;
"May the joy of Christmas Day
  Make your whole year gladder, brighter!"
    Join their singing,
      "To each home
      Our Christ has come,
    All Love's treasures with Him bringing!"

Margaret Deland.

"Musical Watchmen"

In their origin which dates back to the fourteenth or fifteenth century, the waytes were probably musical watchmen, who

were required to give practical evidence of their vigilance by playing on the hautboy or flageolet at stated intervals during the night.

Their regular uniform consisted of blue gowns, red sleeves and caps, and a silver collar about the neck. They also wore a badge, usually an escutcheon with the arms of the borough.

In modern times the Christmas Waits are unorganized bands of men and boys, who on Christmas Eve parade the streets of towns and villages in England, singing carols, and accompanying themselves on simple wind-instruments, for a gratuity from the houses in front of which they stop.

Selected.

"Hark! The Waits Are Playing"

But hark! The Waits are playing, and they break my childish sleep! What images do I associate with the Christmas music as I see them set forth on the Christmas tree? Known before all the others, keeping far apart from all the others, they gather round my little bed.

An angel speaking to a group of shepherds in a field; some travelers with eyes uplifted, following a star; a baby in a manger; a child in a spacious temple, talking with grave men; a solemn figure, with a mild and beautiful face, raising a dead girl by the hand; again, near a city gate calling back the son of a widow, on his bier, to life; a crowd of people looking through the open roof of a chamber where he sits, and letting down a sick person on a bed, with ropes; the same in a tempest, walking on the water to a ship; again, on a seashore, teaching a great multitude; again, with a child upon his knee, and other children round; again, restoring sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, health to the sick, strength to the lame, knowledge to the ignorant; again, dying upon a cross,

watched by armed soldiers, a thick darkness coming on, the earth beginning to shake, and only one voice heard, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

Charles Dickens.

God bless the master of this house,
And all that are therein,
And to begin this Christmas-tide
With mirth now let us sing.
For the Saviour of all people
Upon this time was born,
Who did from death deliver us,
When we were left forlorn.

* * * * * * *

Then let us all most merry be,
Since that we are come here,
And we do hope before we part
To taste some of your beer.
For the Saviour of all people
Upon this time was born,
Who did from death deliver us,
When we were left forlorn.

Your beer, your beer, your Christmas beer,
That seems to be so strong,
And we do wish that Christmas-tide
Was twenty times so long.
For the Saviour of all people
Upon this time was born,
Who did from death deliver us,
When we were left forlorn.

Old English Song.

Christmas Tide

Even the sound of the Waits, rude as may be their minstrelsy, breaks upon the midwatches of a winter night with the effect of perfect harmony. As I have been awakened by them in that still and solemn hour, "when deep sleep falleth upon man," I have listened with a hushed delight, and, connecting them with the sacred and joyous occasion, have almost fancied them into another celestial choir, announcing peace and good-will to mankind.

Washington Irving.

Song of the Christmas Waits

God's great Gift to man forlorn
In a winter night was born:
Angels tell the glorious tale,
Let not, Earth, thy welcome fail,
Hail to the Manger-born, all hail!
Let not thy welcome fail.
Hail! Little Child, how sunk Thy lot!
Thy great might Thou hast forgot:
Guider of all the stars that shone,
Sleep, Thy glory it is gone.

Wake, you friends and neighbors, wake,
Thank our God for this Child's sake;
Sing, my heart, the anthem swell
Since that blessed birth befell.
Hail to the Manger-born, all hail!
Let not thy welcome fail.
Hail! Now is won the gift that we
Lost beneath the apple tree.
Now is won the heavenly shore,
No more light wanes, or life gives o'er.

Jean Ingelow.

Christmas Eve

Hush! Hush! Those are the village waits, not your noisy musicians, whose clamour arouses a whole neighborhood, but those who bring no other instruments excepting their voices—who go from hamlet to hamlet all night long, chanting such carols as our pious forefathers loved to listen to in those good old days when Christmas was not only a holiday, but a holy time. Let us uplift the corner of the white blind gently. Although they hope that all are listening, they would but feel uneasy to know that they were overlooked. We shall be very glad to see them on boxing-day, when they will come around and simply announce themselves as the waits; then we can reward them for the pleasure they have afforded us. A few old-fashioned doors will be opened, where they will be cheered with elder-wine, spiced ale, and plum-cake; they know the houses. There are those who make a point of sitting up to receive them; cold although the night may be, they will not lack bodily comfort. But they are gone; you can just hear their voices at intervals, sounding faintly over the snow, when the red cock that crows from the far-off farm is silent, for they are now singing at the lonely grange beside the wood. The old farmer who resides there would never fancy it was Christmas unless he heard the waits. Rumour, who is a slanderer, does say that when they have left his old-fashioned parlour they never again sing in tune—that bass is heard in place of tenor, and treble gets over his part before the others have well begun—and that, when complaints are made the next morning, the only answer is, "Christmas comes but once a year."

Thomas Miller (1852).

Ye Christmasse Tree

The wide world knows a tree full strong,
And fairer yet than each and all;
More worthy of the minstrel's song
In cottage low or princely hall.

The Christmas tree whose thought of love
To men upon those shores of time,
Still bears glad tidings from above,
And news to all of truth sublime.

Selected.

The Little Christmas Tree

The Christmas Day was coming, the Christmas Eve
drew near,
The fir trees, they were talking low at midnight, cold
and clear:
And this is what the fir trees said, all in the pale
moonlight:
"Now, which of us shall chosen be, to grace the holy
night?"

The tall trees and the goodly trees raised each a lofty
head,
In glad and secret confidence, though not a word they said.
But one, the baby of the band, could not restrain a sigh—
"You all will be approved," he said, "but oh! what
chance have I?

"I am so small, so very small, no one will mark or know
How thick and green my needles are, how true my
branches grow.
Few toys and candles could I hold, but heart and will
are free,
And in my heart of hearts, I know I am a Christ-
mas tree."

The Christmas angel hovered near; he caught the
grieving word,
And, laughing low, he hurried forth, with love and
pity stirred.
He sought, and found St. Nicholas, the dear old Christ-
mas saint,
And in his fatherly, kind ear, rehearsed the fir tree's
plaint.

Saints are all-powerful, we know, so it befell that day
That, axe on shoulder, to the grove a woodman took his way.
One baby girl he had at home, and he went forth to find
A little tree as small as she, just suited to his mind.

Oh! glad and proud the baby fir, amid its brethren tall,
To be thus chosen and singled out, the first among them all!
He stretched his fragrant branches, his little heart beat fast;
He was a real Christmas tree — he had his wish at last.

One large and shining apple, with cheeks of ruddy gold;
Six tapers, and a tiny doll was all that he could hold.
The baby laughed, the baby crowed, to see the tapers bright;
The forest baby felt the joy, and shared in the delight.

And when, at last, the tapers died, and when the baby slept,
The little fir, in silent night, a patient vigil kept.
Though scorched and brown its needles were, it had no heart to grieve,—
"I have not lived in vain," he said, "thank God for Christmas Eve."

Susan Coolidge.

A Legend of the Christmas Tree

The Christmas tree seems to have originated in Germany, and can be traced back with certainty to the year 1604.

There is a pretty legend in connection with it, which makes St. Winfrid the inventor of the idea.

Christmas Tide

"In the midst of a crowd of converts he hewed down a giant oak which had formerly been the object of their Druidic worship. As it fell backward like a tower, groaning as it split asunder in four pieces, there stood just behind it, unharmed by the ruin, a young fir tree, pointing a green spire toward the stars.

"Winfrid let the axe drop, and turned to speak to the people. 'This little tree, a young child of the forest, shall be your holy tree tonight. It is the wood of peace, for your houses are built of the fir. It is the sign of an endless life, for its leaves are ever green. See how it points upward to heaven! Let this be called the tree of the Christ-child; gather about it, not in the wild-wood, but in your own homes; there it will shelter no deeds of blood, but loving gifts, and rites of kindness.'"

* * * * * * *

The Christmas tree was introduced into the Court of St. James about 1840, by Prince Consort Albert of Saxe-Coburg, and the custom spread rapidly among the aristocratic families of London, and was almost immediately adopted by all classes throughout England.

Christmas Tree Fruit

What bears the Christmas tree —
The bright, rich-fruited Christmas tree?
What gather they, expectant-gay,
Who throng around the Christmas tree?
Leaves picked by love-instructed art
From off the branches of the heart:
Fruits culled from every tree and vine
Where zephyrs fly and sunbeams shine.

* * * * * * *

Will Carleton.

CHRISTMAS TIDE

The oak is a strong and stalwart tree,
  And it lifts its branches up,
And catches the dew right gallantly
  In many a dainty cup;
And the world is brighter and better made
  Because of the woodman's stroke,
Descending in sun, or falling in shade,
  On the sturdy form of the oak.
But stronger, I ween, in apparel green,
  And trappings so fair to see,
With its precious freight for small and great,
  Is the beautiful Christmas tree.

The elm is a kind and goodly tree,
  With its branches bending low:
The heart is glad when its form we see,
  And we list to the river's flow.
Ay, the heart is glad and the pulses bound,
  And joy illumes the face,
Whenever a goodly elm is found,
  Because of its beauty and grace.
But kinder, I ween, more goodly in mien,
  With branches more drooping and free,
The tint of whose leaves fidelity weaves,
  Is the beautiful Christmas tree.

Hattie S. Russell.

"There Was Everything, and More"

I have been looking on, this evening, at a merry company of children assembled round that pretty German toy, a Christmas tree. The tree was planted in the middle of a great round table, and towered high above their heads. It was brilliantly

lighted by a multitude of little tapers, and everywhere sparkled and glittered with bright objects. There were rosy-cheeked dolls, hiding behind the green leaves, and there were real watches (with movable hands, at least, and an endless capacity of being wound up) dangling from innumerable twigs: there were French-polished tables, chairs, bedsteads, wardrobes, eight-day clocks, and various other articles of domestic furniture * * * perched among the boughs, as if in preparation for some fairy housekeeping: there were jolly, broad-faced little men, much more agreeable in appearance than many real men — and no wonder, for their heads took off, and showed them to be full of sugar-plums: there were fiddles and drums: there were tambourines: books, work-boxes, paint-boxes, sweetmeat-boxes, peep-show boxes, and all kinds of boxes: there were trinkets for the elder girls, far brighter than any grown-up gold and jewels: * * * there were humming-tops, needle-cases, pen-wipers, smelling-bottles, conversation cards, bouquet-holders: real fruit, made artificially dazzling with gold leaf: imitation apples, pears and walnuts, crammed with surprises: in short, as a pretty child before me delightedly whispered to another pretty child, her bosom friend, "There was everything, and more."

Charles Dickens.

Ye Christmasse Bells

Sing, Christmas bells!
Say to the earth, this is the morn
Whereon our Saviour-King is born;
Sing to all men — the bond, the free,
The rich, the poor, the high, the low,
The little child that sports in glee,
The aged folk that tottering go,—
Proclaim the morn
That Christ is born,
That saveth them and saveth me.

Eugene Field.

Christmas Tide

Wake me tonight, my mother dear,
That I may hear
The Christmas bells, so soft and clear,
To high and low glad tidings tell,
How God the Father loved us well:
How God the Eternal Son
Came to undo what we had done.

John Keble.

It is the calm and solemn night!
A thousand bells ring out, and throw
Their joyous peals abroad, and smite
The darkness, charm'd and holy now.
The night that erst no name had worn,
To it a happy name is given;
For in that stable lay new-born
The peaceful Prince of Earth and Heaven,
In the solemn midnight
Centuries ago.

Alfred Domett.

The bells which usher in the morn
Have ever drawn my mind away
To Bethlehem, where Christ was born,
And the low stable where He lay,
In which the large-eyed oxen fed;
To Mary, bowing low her head,
And looking down, with love sincere;
For Christmas still comes once a year.

Selected.

CHRISTMAS TIDE

There are sounds in the sky when the year grows old,
And the winds of the winter blow —
When night and the moon are clear and cold,
And the stars shine on the snow,
Or wild is the blast and the bitter sleet
That beats on the window-pane:
But blest on the frosty hills are the feet
Of the Christmas time again!
Chiming sweet when the night wind swells,
Blest is the sound of the Christmas bells!

Dear are the sounds of the Christmas chimes
In the land of the ivied towers,
And they welcome the dearest of festival times
In this Western world of ours!
Bright on the holly and mistletoe bough
The English firelight falls,
And bright are the wreathed evergreens now
That gladden our own home walls!
And hark! the first sweet note that tells
The welcome of the Christmas bells!

Anonymous.

O Christmas, merry Christmas!
Is it really come again,
With its memories and greetings,
With its joy and with its pain?
There's a minor in the carol,
And a shadow in the light,
And a spray of cypress twining
With the holly wreath tonight.

And the hush is never broken
By laughter, light and low,
As we listen in the starlight
To the "bells across the snow."

O Christmas, merry Christmas!
'Tis not so very long
Since other voices blended
With the carol and the song!
If we could but hear them singing
As they are singing now,
If we could but see the radiance
Of the crown on each dear brow,
There would be no sigh to smother,
No hidden tear to flow,
As we listen in the starlight
To the "bells across the snow."

Frances Ridley Havergal.

The Christmas Peal

Swinging across the belfry tower,
The bells rang backward all the hour;
They rang, they reeled, they rushed, they roared;
Their tongue, tumultuous music poured!
The old walls rocked, the peals outswept,
Far up the steep their echoes leapt,
Soaring and sparkling till they burst
Like bubbles round the topmost horn
That reddens to the hint of morn,
That halts some trembling star the first;
And all the realms of ice and frost

CHRISTMAS TIDE

From field to field those joy bells tossed.
They answered from their airy height;
They thrilled; they loosed their bands for flight;
They knew that it was Christmas night!

Harriet Prescott Spofford.

It chanced upon the merry, merry Christmas Eve
I went sighing past the church across the moorland dreary,—
"Oh! never sin and want and woe this earth will leave,
And the bells but mock the wailing round, they sing so cheery.
How long, O Lord! how long before Thou come again?
Still in cellar, and in garret, and on moorland dreary,
The orphans moan, and widows weep, and poor men toil in vain,
Till earth is sick of hope deferred, though Christmas bells be cheery."

Then arose a joyous clamour from the wildfowl on the mere,
Beneath the stars, across the snow, like clear bells ringing,
And a voice within cried—"Listen! Christmas carols even here!
Though thou be dumb, yet o'er their work the stars and snows are singing.
Blind! I live, I love, I reign; and all the nations through,
With the thunders of My judgments even now are ringing;
Do thou fulfil thy work, but as yon wildfowl do,
Thou wilt hear no less the wailing, yet hear through it angels singing."

Charles Kingsley.

CHRISTMAS DAY

We ring the bells, and we raise the strain.
We hang up garlands everywhere
And bid the tapers twinkle fair,
And feast and frolic—and then we go
Back to the same old lives again.

Susan Coolidge.

Christmasse Day

Consider, O my soul, what morn is this!
Whereon the eternal Lord of all things made
For us, poor mortals, and our endless bliss,
Came down from heaven; and, in a manger laid,
The first, rich offerings of our ransom paid:
Consider, O my soul, what morn is this!

Selwyn Image.

Christmas Tide

The day dawns with a benediction: it passes in holiday happiness, and ends in soft and pensive regret. It could not be the most beautiful of festivals if it were doctrinal, or dogmatic, or theological, or local. It is a universal holiday because it is the jubilee of a universal sentiment, moulded only by a new epoch and subtly adapted to newer forms of the old faith.

George William Curtis.

Christmas Weather

How will it dawn, the coming Christmas Day?
A northern Christmas, such as painters love,
And kinsfolk, shaking hands but once a year,
And dames who tell old legends by the fire?
Red sun, blue sky, white snow, and pearled ice,
Keen ringing air, which sets the blood on fire,
And makes the old man merry with the young,
Through the short sunshine, through the longer night?
Or southern Christmas, dark and dank with mist,
And heavy with the scent of steaming leaves,
And rosebuds mouldering on the dripping porch;
One twilight, without rise or set of sun,
Till beetles drone along the hollow lane,
And round the leafless hawthorns, flitting bats
Hawk the pale moths of winter? Welcome then,
At best, the flying gleam, the flying shower,
The rain-pools glittering on the long white roads,
And shadows sweeping on from down to down
Before the salt Atlantic gale: yet come
In whatsoever garb, or gay or sad,
Come fair, come foul, 'twill still be Christmas Day.

Charles Kingsley.

CHRISTMAS TIDE

Christmas Dawn

Shining ones with drooping eyes,
At the gates of Paradise,
Waiting for the world of joy
That shall sin and death destroy:
Quench your tapers, burning dim,
For the tender Christmas hymn
Rises faintly thro' the hush,
Heralding the morning's blush.

See the delicate white light
Silvering the edge of night!
Spread your pinions half unfurled!
Shafts of splendor smite the world!
Angels twain that watch and pray
For the dawn of Christmas Day:
Lift your eyes and look abroad,
Lo! the glory of the Lord!

Celia Thaxter.

Christmas Weather

Not an "old-fashioned" Christmas this year, for there was no snow or ice; the sky was clear and the air pure, but yet without the sharp, bracing clearness and purity that Master Jack Frost brings when he comes to see us in one of his nice, bright sunny humours. For he has humours as well as other people—not only is he fickle in the extreme, but even black sometimes, and he is then, I can assure you, a most disagreeable visitor. But this Christmas time he had taken it into his head not to come at all, and the world looked rather reproachful and disconcerted. The poor, bare December world—it

misses its snow garment, so graciously hiding all imperfections revealed by the absence of green grass and fluttering leaves; it misses, too, its winter jewels of icicles and hoar frost.

Mary Louisa Molesworth.

Like small curled feathers, white and soft,
The little clouds went by,
Across the moon, and past the stars,
And down the western sky;
In upland pastures, where the grass
With frosted dew was white,
Like snowy clouds the young sheep lay,
That first, best Christmas night.

Margaret Deland.

This is Christmas Day, the anniversary of the world's greatest event. To one day all the early world looked forward; to the same day the later world looks back. That day holds time together.

Alexander Smith.

What has become of our Christmas — the one we knew when we were boys and girls — we old folk of sixty-odd? Can we ever forget its cheer, its simplicity, its spirit of making glad? The giving of gifts without display, expressing our hearts and not our bank accounts — the joyousness that brightened every minute of the day from the earliest gray dawn, with the children reaching for their stockings over the hearth, to the Godspeeding of the last guest at midnight!

F. Hopkinson Smith.

CHRISTMAS TIDE

A Christmas Prayer

In praying and praising, in giving and receiving,
In eating and drinking, in singing and making merry,
In parents' gladness and in children's mirth,
In dear memories of those who have departed,
In good comradeship with those who are here,
In kind wishes for those who are away,
In patient waiting, sweet contentment, generous cheer,
God bless us every one, this day, with the blessing of Jesus.

Henry Van Dyke.

"God Bless It"

"I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come around — apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that — as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And, therefore, * * * though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe it has done me good; and I say, God bless it!"

Charles Dickens.

At Christmas-tide the open hand
Scatters its bounty o'er sea and land,
And none are left to grieve alone,
For Love is heaven and claims its own.

Margaret E. Sangster.

Christmas Tide

It is the Christmas time:
And up and down 'twixt heaven and earth,
In glorious grief and solemn mirth,
The shining angels climb.

Dinah Mulock Craik.

"Tiny Tim" was glad to be at church on Christmas Day because he thought the sight of him,—dear little soul,—might remind folk who it was that gave the lame the power to walk.

Selected.

"God Bless Us, Every One"

O bless the happy Christmas morn
On which the Child was born!
Its song so glad, its words of cheer
To heart and memory dear!
Its gifts to young, and old as well:
Its merry chimes, which sweetly tell
The story of His humble birth,
The King of all the earth!

O bless the hallowed joy it brings:
The hope from which it springs:
The goodness trooping in its train
From yon far distant plain.
And so, with Tiny Tim, we pray,
Upon this peaceful Christmas Day,
"God bless us! bless us, every one,"
With deeds of kindness done.

Selected.

A Poem on Christmas

Heap on more wood!—the wind is chill;
But let it whistle as it will,
We'll keep our Christmas merry still.
Each age has deemed the new-born year
The fittest time for festal cheer:
Even heathen yet, the savage Dane,
At Jol more deep the mead did drain:
High on the beach his galleys drew,
And feasted all his pirate crew:
Then, in his low and pine-built hall,
Where shields and axes decked the wall,
They gorged upon the half-dressed steer:
Caroused in seas of sable beer:
While round, in brutal jest, were thrown
The half-gnawed rib, and marrow-bone:
Or listened all, in grim delight,
While scalds yelled out the joys of fight.
Then forth, in frenzy, would they hie,
While wildly loose their red locks fly,
And, dancing round the blazing pile,
They make such barbarous mirth the while,
As best might to the mind recall
The boisterous joys of Odin's hall.
And well our Christian sires of old
Loved when the year its course had rolled,
And brought blithe Christmas back again,
With all his hospitable train.
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honour to the holy night:
On Christmas Eve the bells were rung:
On Christmas Eve the mass was sung:
That only night, in all the year,

Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green:
Forth to the wood did merry men go,
To gather in the mistletoe.

Sir Walter Scott.

Christmas hath a darkness
Brighter than the blazing noon,
Christmas hath a chillness
Warmer than the heat of June,
Christmas hath a beauty
Lovelier than the world can show.

Christina G. Rossetti.

At Chrystemesse-tyde

At Chrystemesse-tyde
Two sorrie Thynges there be,—
Ay, three:
A neste from which ye Fledglings have been taken,
A Lambe forsaken,
A redde Leaf from ye Wild Rose rudely shaken.

Of gladde Thynges there be more,—
Ay, four:
A Larke above ye olde Neste blithely singing,
A Wild Rose clinging
In safety to a Rock, a Shepherde bringing
A Lambe found, in his arms, and
Chrystemesse
Bells a-ringing.

Unknown.

Christmasse Carols

Wake me that I, the twelve month long,
May bear the song
About me in the world's great throng;
That treasured joys of Christmas-tide
May with mine hour of gloom abide;
The Christmas carol ring
Deep in my heart, when I would sing,
Each of the twelve good days,
Its earnest yield of duteous love and praise
Ensuring happy months and hallowing common ways.

John Keble.

Noël, or Nowell

The term "carol" appears formerly to have signified a song joined with a dance, a union frequently found in early religious ceremonies; and it is used in this sense by Chaucer, Boccaccio, Spenser, and others.

The Christmas carol (called Noël) originated in medieval France, where it was cultivated with so much enthusiasm that it soon spread to other countries. In England this became Nowell, and was likewise used as a refrain or joyous exclamation in the course of the song. It occurs thus in the following verses representing masquers making their rounds for wassail and largess.

"Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell,
Who ys there that syngeth so well nowell?"

"I am here, syre Christmasse."
"Well, come, my lord syre Christmasse,
Welcome to us all bothe more and lasse,
Com ner, nowell."

The First Nowell

The first Nowell the Angel did say
Was to three poor shepherds in fields as they lay:
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep
In a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell,
Born is the King of Israel.

Traditional.

Old Carol

God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born upon this day,
To save us all from Satan's pow'r
When we were gone astray.
O tidings of comfort and joy!
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day.

In Bethlehem, in Jewry,
This blessed Babe was born,
And laid within a manger,
Upon this blessed morn;
The which His mother, Mary,
Nothing did take in scorn.

From God, our Heavenly Father,
A blessed angel came;
And unto certain shepherds
Brought tidings of the same:
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by name.

"Fear not," then said the angel,
"Let nothing you affright,
This day is born a Saviour
Of virtue, power, and might,
So frequently to vanquish all
The friends of Satan quite."

The shepherds at those tidings
Rejoicèd much in mind,

And left their flocks a-feeding
In tempest, storm, and wind,
And went to Bethlehem straightway,
This blessed Babe to find.

And when to Bethlehem they came,
Whereat this infant lay,
They found Him in a manger,
Where oxen feed on hay.
His mother Mary kneeling,
Unto the Lord did pray.
O tidings of comfort and joy!
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day.

Selected.

Old Carol

As Joseph was a-walking,
He heard an angel sing:
"This night shall be the birth-time
Of Christ, the Heavenly King.

"He neither shall be born
In housen nor in hall,
Nor in the place of Paradise,
But in an ox's stall.

"He neither shall be clothed
In purple nor in pall,
But in the fair white linen
That usen babies all.

CHRISTMAS TIDE

"He neither shall be rockèd
In silver nor in gold,
But in a wooden manger
That resteth in the mould."

As Joseph was a-walking,
There did an angel sing,
And Mary's child at midnight
Was born to be our King.

Then be ye glad, good people,
This night of all the year,
And light ye up your candles,
For His star it shineth clear.

Selected.

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold:
"Peace to the earth, good-will to men,
From Heaven's all-gracious King."
The earth in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.

Giardini. 1760.

* * * And thus was kept the first Christmas,— the Christmas in the Year One, with carols by the choir of Heaven, and God's own Son, the Saviour of the world, coming as a Christmas gift for all mankind.

George Hodges.

Carol, Brothers, Carol

Carol, brothers, carol,
  Carol joyfully;
Carol the good tidings,
  Carol merrily;
And pray a gladsome Christmas
  For all Christian men.
Carol, brothers, carol,
  Christmas Day again.

At the joyous table,
  Think of those who've none,—
The orphans and the widow,
  Hungry and alone.
Bountiful your off'ring
  To the altar bring;
Let the poor and needy
  Christmas carols sing.

Listening angel music,
  Discord sure must cease;
Who dare hate his brother
  On this day of peace?
While the heav'ns are telling
  To mankind good-will,
Only love and kindness
  Ev'ry bosom fill.

Let our hearts, responding,
  To the seraph band,
Wish this morning's sunshine
  Bright on ev'ry land!
Word and deed and prayer

CHRISTMAS DAY

Speed the grateful sound,
Bidding Merry Christmas!
All the world around.

William A. Muhlenberg.

While shepherds watch'd their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down
And glory shone around.

"Fear not," said he, for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind;
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

"To you in David's town, this day
Is born of David's line,
The Saviour, who is Christ the Lord,
And this shall be the sign.

"The heavenly Babe you there shall find,
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
And in a manger laid."

Thus spake the seraph, and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels, praising God, who thus
Addressed their joyful song:

"All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace,
Good-will henceforth from Heaven to men
Begin, and never cease."

Nahum Tate.

CHRISTMAS TIDE

Hark! the herald angels sing:
"Glory to the new-born King!
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled."

Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Hail th' incarnate Deity:
Pleases, as man, with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel!

Hail! the heav'n-born Prince of peace!
Hail! the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings.

Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die:
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.

Charles Wesley, 1793.

The earth has grown old with its burden of care,
But at Christmas it always is young.
The heart of the jewel burns lustrous and fair,
And its soul full of music breaks forth on the air,
When the song of the angels is sung.

It is coming, old earth, it is coming tonight!
On the snowflakes that cover thy sod
The feet of the Christ-child fall gentle and white,
And the voice of the Christ-child tells out
That mankind are the children of God.

CHRISTMAS TIDE

On the sad and the lonely, the wretched and poor,
The voice of the Christ-child shall fall;
And to every blind wanderer open the door
Of a hope that he dared not to dream of before,
With a sunshine of welcome for all.

The feet of the humblest may walk in the field
Where the feet of the holiest have trod,
This, this is the marvel to mortals revealed
When the silvery trumpets of Christmas have pealed
That mankind are the children of God.

Phillips Brooks.

When the song of the angels startled the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night, it was the first strain of a harmony to sound on till it is completed where it was begun in heaven.

Bishop Huntington.

The shepherds sing; and shall I silent be?
My God, no hymn for thee?
My soul's a shepherd too; a flock it feeds
Of thoughts and words and deeds.
The pasture is Thy word, the streams Thy grace,
Enriching every place.

George Herbert.

As soon as these blessed choristers had sung their Christmas carol, and taught the Church a hymn to put into her offices for ever in the anniversary of this festivity, the angels returned to heaven.

Jeremy Taylor.

CHRISTMAS DAY

God rest ye, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day.

The dawn rose red on Bethlehem,
The stars shone through the gray,
When Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day.

God rest ye, little children,
Let nothing you affright,
For Jesus Christ, your Saviour,
Was born this happy night.

Along the hills of Galilee
The white flocks sleeping lay
When Christ, the child of Nazareth,
Was born on Christmas Day.

God rest ye, all good Christians,
Upon this blessed morn
The Lord of all good Christians
Was of a woman born.

Now all your sorrows He doth heal,
Your sins He takes away,
For Jesus Christ, your Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day.

Dinah Mulock Craik.

Ye Christmasse Feast

Now all our neighbours' chimneys smoke,
And Christmas logs are burning;
Their ovens they with baked meats choke,
And all their spits are turning.
Without the door let sorrow lie,
And if by cold it hap to die,
We'll bury 't in a Christmas pie,
And evermore be merry.

George Wither.

Christmas Tide

The Groaning Board

The tables were all spread from the first to the last: the sirloyns of beef, the minc'd pies, the plumb-porridge, the capons, turkeys, geese, and plumb-puddings were all brought upon the board; and all those who had sharp stomachs and sharp knives eat heartily and were welcome, which gave rise to the proverb:—

"Merry in the hall, when beards wag all."

John Brand.

A man might then behold
At Christmas, in each hall,
Good fires to curb the cold,
And meat for great and small.
The neighbors were friendly bidden,
And all had welcome true,
The poor from the gates were not chidden
When this old cap was new.

Old Song.

Observe how the chimneys
Do smoak all about,
The cooks are providing
For dinner, no doubt;
But those on whose tables
No victuals appear,
O may they keep Lent
All the rest of the year.

Poor Robin's Almanack.

A Carol, Brynging in the Boar's Head

Caput apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino.

The bore's head in hande bring I,
With garlands gay and rosemary;
I pray you all sing merely,
Qui estes in convivio.

The bore's head, I understande,
Is the chefe servyce in this lande,
Loke wherer it be fande
Servite cum cantico.

Be gladde, lords, both more and lasse,
For this hath ordayned our stewarde
To cheer you all this Christmasse,
The bore's head with mustarde.

Selected.

The Boar's Head

In medieval England it was customary to commence all great Christmas feasts by the solemn ceremony of bringing in the boar's head as the initial dish. The master-cook, preceded by trumpeters and other musicians, and followed by huntsmen with boar-spears and drawn falchions and pages carrying mustard, bore the smoking head aloft on a silver platter, which he deposited at the head of the table. The head was garnished and garlanded with rosemary and laurel, and a lemon, symbol of plenty, was placed between its grinning chops.

To the end of her life, Queen Victoria retained the ancient custom; also in many of the public schools and universities the

boar's head is still the great dish of the Christmas banquet. On such occasions every diner rises and joins in the "Boar's Song" which has been sung for centuries. The words are set to the common chant of the prose version in cathedrals.

Selected.

"By Cock and Pie"

The peacock was anciently in demand for stately banquets. It was often served as a pie, at one end of which his plumed crest appeared above the crust, while at the other his tail was unfolded in all its glory. Over this gorgeous dish did the Knights-errant swear to undertake any perilous enterprise. Hence Justice Shallow's oath, "By cock and pie."

The peacock was also an important dish for the Christmas feast. The skin was first carefully stripped off, with the plumage adhering; stuffed with spices and sweet herbs, the bird was then roasted; when done, and partially cooled, it was sewed up again in its feathers, its beak gilt, and so sent to table, with a dish of extra rich gravy. According to Massenger, it took "the carcasses of three fat wethers bruised for gravy to make sauce for a single peacock."

This "food for lovers and meat for lords" was carried by no menial hands, but was entrusted to the lady-guest, most distinguished by birth or beauty, who bore it into the banquet hall to the sound of music, the rest of the ladies following.

Selected.

The Christmas Pie

"As many mince pies as you taste at Christmas,—
So many happy months will you have."

Old Saying.

Brawn (strips of boar's flesh, about two feet long and ten inches in diameter) is a dish of great antiquity, and may be found in most of the old bills of fare for coronation and other great feasts.

"Brawn, mustard and malmsey" were directed for breakfast at Christmas, during Queen Elizabeth's reign.

In referring to the service of the boar's head, Washington Irving in "The Sketch-book" writes:—

"I like the old custom," said the squire, "not merely because it is stately and pleasing in itself, but because it was observed at the college at Oxford at which I was educated. When I hear the old song chanted, it brings to mind the time when I was young and gamesome, and the noble old college hall, and my fellow students loitering about in their black gowns; many of whom, poor lads, are now in their graves!"

But however lightly we may allude to the other articles which enter into the charge of the commissariat department, * * * we are by no means at liberty, without a more special notice, to pass over the mystery of mince pie! * * * The origin of this famous dish, like that of the heroic in all kinds and classes, is involved in fable. By some it has been supposed, from the Oriental ingredients which enter into its composition, to have a reference to the offerings made by the Wise Men of the East; and it was anciently the custom to make these pies of an oblong form, thereby representing the manger, in which, on that occasion, those sages found the infant Jesus.

Thomas K. Hervey.

Christmas Tide

In Herrick's time it was customary to set a watch upon the pies on the night before Christmas:—

"Come guard the Christmas pie,
That the thief, though ne'er so sly,
With his flesh-hooks don't come nigh,
To catch it.
From him, who all alone sits there,
Having his eyes still in his ear,
And a deal of nightly fear,
To watch it."

The Turkey's Lament

How bless'd, how envious, were our life,
Could we but 'scape the poulterer's knife!
But man, curs'd man, on turkeys preys
And Christmas shortens all our days.
Sometimes with oysters we combine,
Sometimes assist the savory chine:
From the low peasant to the lord,
The turkey smokes on every board.

John Gay.

As everybody knows, the Christmas bird par excellence in England is not the turkey, but the goose.

The swan, regarded fit "to set before a King," was formerly a standard dish at Christmas and other great festivals; Chaucer's monk, no doubt a good judge,

"A fat swan loved he best of any rost."

Now Grace is said, no longer wait
With eyes downcast on emptie plate,
But se ye Turkey, fat, supine,
On which, good People, ye shall dine!
There lieth he,— a noble bulk
That soon shall be a shattered hulk!
Carve, Goodman, carve with speed and skill —
Ye Guests, spare not, but ete your fill!

Edith M. Thomas.

King Arthur's Table on Christmas Day

(A Humorous Menu)

They served up salmon, venison and wild boars
By hundreds and by dozens and by scores.
Hogsheads of honey, kilderkins of mustard,
Muttons and fatted beeves, and bacon swine,
Herons and bitterns, peacocks, swan and bustard,
Teal, mallard, pigeons, widgeons, and in fine
Plum puddings, pancakes, apple pies and custard,
And therewithal they drank good Gascon wine,
With mead, and ale, and cider of our own,
For porter, punch and negus were not known.

"Whistlecraft"
(John Hookham Frere).

Christmas Feasting in Old Virginia

Amid rayne, winde, frost, and snow, among savages, we were merry with oysters, fish, flesh, wild fowl, and good bred, nor never had better fires in England.

John Smith.

The Mahogany Tree

Christmas is here:
Winds whistle shrill;
Icy and chill.
Little care we:
Little we fear
Weather without.
Sheltered about
The mahogany tree.

Once on the boughs
Birds of rare plume
Sang in its bloom:
Night-birds are we:
Here we carouse.
Singing like them.
Perched round the stem
Of the jolly old tree.

Here let us sport.
Boys, as we sit;
Laughter and wit
Flashing so free.
Life is but short —
When we are gone.
Let them sing on
Round the old tree.

Evenings we knew.
Happy as this;
Faces we miss.
Pleasant to see.
Kind hearts and true.

Gentle, and just,
Peace to your dust!
We sing round the tree.

Care, like a dun,
Lurks at the gate:
Let the dog wait:
Happy we'll be!
Drink, every one:
Pile up the coals,
Fill the red bowls,
Round the old tree!

Sorrows, begone!
Life and its ills,
Duns and their bills,
Bid we to flee.
Come with the dawn,
Envious sprite,
Leave us tonight,
Round the old tree.

William Makepeace Thackeray.

Then comes Christmas morning with its "Christmas present" salutations and after breakfast the greetings of all the assembled slaves of the place and the distributing of gifts of clothes and rations by their master and "Ole Mis," and after a day of play out-of-doors comes the big Christmas dinner, including an endless succession of dishes, together with those set round the table, sometimes three deep, as an old diagram shows, with great center and end-pieces of fruit and desserts, enough to tax the stoutest mahogany to the groaning point.

There are roasts as in England — venison, lamb or mutton, * * * sweet hams, turkeys, and little sucking pigs to take the place of the Boar's Head — the children contending for the chiefest delicacy, his tail; pickles, preserves and jellies, and every possible kind of vegetable; and sometimes the turkey is wild, and trussed poultry and fried chickens by the half-dozen flank it, while home-made currant and blackberry wine, and ale stand side by side with imported Madeira and Port.

B. Ostertag.

A Cynic's Feast

Around the groaning Christmas board,
(Which never equals expectations.)
Where old and young are in accord —
(I hate the most of my relations!)
I view the turkey with delight,
(A tough old bird beyond all question!)
The blazing pudding — what a sight!
('Tis concentrated indigestion!)

J. Ashby-Sterry.

Ye Wassaile Bowle

"'Tis thou that crown'st my glittering hearth
With guiltlesse mirth;
Then givest me Wassaile bowles to drink
Spiced to the brink."

Wassail, from the Anglo-Saxon "Be well," equivalent to "Here's to your health," was originally a pledge drunk between friends.

The wassail bowl became a prominent feature of the mediæval English Christmas festivities, making its appearance not only on the day itself, but on New Year and on Twelfth Night as well. It was often of massive silver, and was frequently decked with ribbons and sprigs of rosemary. "That's for remembrance."

The component parts of its good cheer were ale, sugar, nutmeg, and apples which were roasted hot and sizzled in the ale. This mixture also went under the name of Lamb's Wool, celebrated by Herrick, in his "Twelfth Night":—

"Next croune the bowle full
With gentle Lamb's Wool:
Add sugar, nutmeg, and ginger,
With store of ale too:
And thus ye must doe
To make the Wassaile a swinger."

The "Gossip Bowl"

"The wassail bowl," says Warton, "is Shakespeare's gossip bowl, in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream.'"

Quoth mischievous Puck, enumerating the various forms in which he is wont to appear:—

"And sometimes lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab;
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
And on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale."

Christmas Tide

The gossip bowl was originally a christening cup, for a gossip or godsip was properly a sponsor.

The composition of the gossip bowl was ale, nutmeg, sugar, toast, and roasted crab-apples; and the concoction went by the name of Lamb's Wool.

One of the earliest wassail songs is introduced in Bale's old play of "Kynge John":—

"Wassayle, wassayle, out of the mylke payle,
Wassayle, wassayle, as white as my nayle,
Wassayle, wassayle, in snowe, froste, and hayle,
Wassayle, wassayle, with partriche and rayle,
Wassayle, wassayle, that muche doth avayle,
Wassayle, wassayle, that never wylle fayle."

A Wassail Song

Bring hither the bowle,
The brimming brown bowle,
And quaff the rich juice right merrilie;
Let the wine-cup go round
Till the solid ground
Shall quake at the noise of our revelrie.

Let wassail and wine
Their pleasures combine
While we quaff the rich juice right merrilie;
Let us drink till we die,
When the saints we relie
Will mingle their songs with our revelrie.

Selected.

Of the Wassail Bowl, Leigh Hunt writes:—

"It is a good-natured bowl, and accommodates itself to the means of all classes, rich and poor. You may have it of the costliest wine, or the humblest malt liquor. But in no case must the roasted apples be forgotten."

Christmas Drinking

To wash down the rich dishes of the old-time Christmas feast, there seems to have been a variety to choose from, in the matter of beverages, besides the wassail bowl.

Lordlings, Christmas loves good drinking
Wines of Gascoigne, France, Anjou,
English ale, that drives out thinking,
Prince of liquors old and new.
Every neighbor shares the bowl,
Drinks of the spicy liquor deep,
Drinks his fill without controul,
Till he drowns his care in sleep.

Anglo-Norman Carol, Fifteenth Century.

Let now the chimneys blaze
And cups o'erflow with wine,
Let well-tuned words amaze
With harmony divine.
Now yellow waxen lights
Shall wait on honey love,
While youthful revels, masques, and courtly sights,
Sleep's leaden spells remove.

Thomas Campion.

Christmasse Giving

What can I give Him,
  Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
  I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man
  I would do my part,—
Yet what I can I give Him:
  Give my heart.

Christina G. Rossetti.

Christmas Tide

"A Day of Gifts"

The custom of exchanging presents on a certain day in the year is very much older than Christmas and means very much less. It has obtained in almost all ages of the world, and among many different nations.

It is a fine thing, or a foolish thing, as the case may be: an encouragement to friendliness, or a tribute to fashion: an expression of good nature, or a bid for favour: an outgoing of generosity, or a disguise of greed: a cheerful old custom, or a futile old farce, according to the spirit which animates it and the form which it takes.

But when this ancient and variously interpreted tradition of a day of gifts was transferred to the Christmas season, it was brought into vital contact with an idea which must transform it, and with an example in the life of Jesus. The idea is unselfish interest in the happiness of others.

Henry Van Dyke.

Anticipation

"I'm so glad tomorrow is Christmas, because I'm going to have lots of presents."

"So am I glad, though I don't expect any presents but a pair of mittens."

"And so am I; but I sha'n't have any presents at all."

As the three little girls trudged home from school they said these things, and as Tilly spoke, both the others looked at her with pity and some surprise, for she spoke cheerfully, and they wondered how she could be happy when she was so poor she could have no presents on Christmas.

Louisa M. Alcott.

CHRISTMAS TYDE

As the Magi came bearing gifts, so do we also,—gifts that relieve want; gifts that are sweet and fragrant with friendship; gifts that breathe love; gifts that mean service; gifts inspired still by the star which shone over the City of David, nearly two thousand years ago.

Kate Douglas Wiggin.

Oh! Christmas is coming again, you say,
And you long for the things he is bringing;
But the costliest gift may not gladden the day,
Nor help on the merry bells ringing.
Some getting is losing, you understand;
Some hoarding is far from saving;
What you hold in your hand may slip from your hand,—
There is something better than having;
We are richer for what we give,
And only by giving we live.

Lucy Larcom.

When we look seriously at the flippant degradation of Christmas, which has suddenly become so marked, and at the spiritual decadence which accompanies it, we shall probably, most of us, say that it is time to call a halt. This miserable and foolish business of giving because we have received, encouraged as it is by shopkeepers, fed by our own mean ambition and vanity, nourished by a paltry unwillingness to "be under obligations," and by the mere fashion of the period which decrees Christmas excesses, this silly and fatiguing custom has got to stop;—and women are the folk to stop it.

Margaret Deland.

Christmas Tide

The Value of a Present

When Christmas is made an occasion for sending expensive presents of all sorts and kinds to all sorts of people simply as a compliance with the fashion of the hour, the most beautiful of festivals is made cheap and tawdry by gross misuse. The value of a present lies in the sincerity of the feeling which it represents, and the expression, not only of regard but also of respect for the recipient which it symbolizes. When persons of moderate means make gifts which are entirely out of relation to their incomes and their usual way of living, there is no real honor either in the sending or in the acceptance of the remembrance. The day which commemorates the birth of a little child in a manger ought to be kept holy by simplicity, sincerity, absence of pretension, and joy of heart.

Hamilton Wright Mabie.

A Christmas Metamorphosis

His gloves were eights,
  His socks were tens,
His shirts fifteens,
  Like many men's—
Before Christmas.

His gloves were tens—
  Such were the fates—
His shirts fifteens,
  His socks just eights—
After Christmas.

Lurana W. Sheldon.

Their Christmas Gifts

What, oh what shall he give to her
  As sweet Christmas grace?
Chain, or bracelet, or silk, or fur,
  Ribbons, or lace?
A belt, a buckle, a diary?
  A chafing-dish?
A rose-jar? Even for a rosary
  He had heard her wish.
Handkerchiefs? Perfumes? A tray for pins?
  A girdle? A fan?
(Ah, now indeed, he feels for his sins,
  He is merely man!)
Flowers? Candy? An opera hood?
  A terrier small?
Hopeless he thinks, if he only could,
  He would give them ALL—
For whenever he looks, his eyes are set
On something she'd love to have—or get!

What, oh what can she give to him?
  As she cast about
She fears the chances are rather slim
  Of her finding out.
He smokes just one kind of cigar,
  There's obstacle first!
Pipes—not any—another bar!
  If she only durst
Buy him neckties or slippers! Those
  Girls can never choose!
And an umbrella too well she knows
  He'll proceed to lose:
For silken pillows he nothing cares—

Books are a bore:
A lounging-jacket he never wears;
Well — there's nothing more;
And then she learns, it is then she can,
How simple and few are the needs of man!

Madeline Bridges.

"Presents," I often say, "endear Absents."

Charles Lamb.

December's Gift

Old, gray December, patriarch of the year!
The world forgets what homage is your due
In its mad haste to usher in the new,
Whose coming footstep we can faintly hear.
Your sister months did each with gifts appear,
With gracious largess did our path bestrew;
Their treasures garnered, what is left for you
But bare boughs tossing 'neath skies cold and drear?
A gift surpassing all! Yours was the night
Filled with the radiance of that heavenly light;
Your stars beheld the angels bending down
Above the glory in the white walled town.
Oh! glad December, let your clear chimes ring
The Christ Child's message, which is yours to bring.

Ada Stewart Shelton.

Christmasse Customs

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

Alfred Tennyson.

Christmas Today

"Christmas Past"

It was indeed a "gracious" time, and as we read of the revels and ceremonies and find foolish beliefs of Christmas Past, we might regret what we have lost in this tamer and less picturesque age, if we did not know that never before in history was Christmas kept so truly and heartily in the spirit of the day as it is now. We have dropped a good many rude and some pretty customs, but we have gained a broadening spirit of almost universal charity, a feeling of real brotherhood, that is perhaps none the less real that it is held in check a good deal during the rest of the year.

Charles Dudley Warner.

It is, alas! but too true that the spirit of hearty festivity in which our ancestors met this season has been long on the decline, and much of the joyous pomp with which it was once received has long since passed away. * * * From a period of high ceremonial and public celebration, which it long continued to be in England, the Christmas-tide has tamed away into a period of domestic union and social festivity.

Thomas K. Hervey.

The traditionary customs of gold-hearted antiquity, its feudal hospitalities, and lordly wassailings, have passed away with the baronial castles and stately manor-houses in which they were celebrated. They comported with the shadowy hall, the great oaken gallery, and the tapestried parlor, but are unfitted to the light, showy saloons and gay drawing-rooms of the modern villa.

Washington Irving.

Christmas Tide

"The Lord of Misrule"

So important a time was Christmas, that in every great household in England and Scotland there was appointed, with considerable prerogatives, a ruler or king to direct the revels of the Christmas-tide, and to preside over its ceremonies.

Under the title of Christmas Prince, Lord of Misrule, or Abbot of Unreason—his last descendant, the Twelfth Night King—still rules with a diminished glory over the lingering revelries of a single night.

The motto of the Court Lord of Misrule was "semper feriano" (always keeping holiday), and his crest was the holm-bush or evergreen holly.

To shorten winter's sadness,
See where the folks with gladness
Disguised all are coming,
Right wantonly a-mumming.
Fa la.

While youthful sports are lasting,
To feasting turn our fasting;
With revels and with wassails
Make grief and care our vassals.
Fa la.

For youth, it well beseemeth,
That pleasure be esteemeth;
And sullen age is hated,
That mirth would have abated.
Fa la.

Selected.

The Mummers

The Mummers or players were for the most part country lads variously masked and grotesquely dressed, who, tricked out with swords and gilt-paper hats, went about on Christmas Eve from house to house, and wherever received, giving a rude performance styled "A Mystery."

The main object of the visit was thus delicately hinted:—

"Ladies and gentlemen,
Our story is ended,
Our money-box is recommended;
Five or six shillings will not do us harm,
Silver or copper or gold if you can."

Selected.

The Mummers were not all wandering players, for Brand, an authority on the subject, writes:—

"Then comes mumming or masquerading, when the squire's wardrobe is ransacked for dresses of all kinds. Corks are burnt to black the faces of the fair, or make deputy-moustaches, and every one in the family, except the squire himself, must be transformed."

Games and Sports

Among the old Christmas games may be enumerated:—Hoodman Blind, Shoe the Wild Mare, Hot Cockles, Steal the White Loaf, Bob-apple, Puss-in-the-corner; besides card-playing "for counters, nails and points"; story-telling and dancing.

Christmas Tide

Old-time Dances

If we look at the figures of some of the old dances, our dancing-room coryphees will not be sorry to be spared the task of learning them. Take the account of the brawl in one of our old plays, which one of the characters says she has forgotten: "Why! 'tis but two singles on the left, two on the right, three doubles, a traverse of six round; do this thrice; 'currant to pace'; a figure of eight, three singles broken down, come up, meet two doubles, fall back, and then honour."

William Sandys.

Christmas Boxes

In the early days of Christianity, boxes were placed in churches for promiscuous charities and opened on Christmas. The contents were distributed the following day by the priests, and called the "dole of the Christmas Box," or the "box money."

Later, on Boxing Day, December 26th, it became the custom to bestow a small gratuity to servants, and apprentices were wont to carry a box round to their master's customers.

"Gladly the boy with Christmas box in hand,
Throughout the town his devious route pursues,
And of his master's customers implores
The yearly mite."

The custom became general, for in "Swift's Journal" we find this entry:—

"By the Lord Harry, I shall be undone here with Christmas boxes. The rogues at the coffee-house have raised their tax, every one giving a crown, and I gave mine for shame, besides a great many half-crowns to great men's porters.

Selected.

Christmas Tide

A cruel indoor sport was called the "Fox and the Cat," in which Reynard hunted and killed poor Tabby.

A favorite Christmas sport has been handed down under the name of "Snapdragon." Brandy is poured over a quantity of raisins in a large shallow dish, and ignited. The bystanders endeavor by turns to grasp a raisin by plunging their hands through the flames. This arduous feat, requiring both courage and rapidity of action, causes considerable merriment at the expense of the unsuccessful competitors.

Here he comes with flaming bowl,
Don't he mean to take his toll,
Snip! Snap! Dragon!

Take care you don't take too much,
Be not greedy in your clutch,
Snip! Snap! Dragon!

With his blue and lapping tongue
Many of you will be stung,
Snip! Snap! Dragon!

For he snaps at all that comes
Snatching at his feast of plums,
Snip! Snap! Dragon.

But old Christmas makes him come,
Though he looks so fee! fa! fum!
Snip! Snap! Dragon!

Don't 'ee fear him, be but bold—
Out he goes, his flames are cold,
Snip! Snap! Dragon!

Selected.

Christmasse Lullabies

Sing low, indeed; and softly bleat,
You lambing ewes, about her feet,
  Lest ye should wake the Child from sleep.
No other hour so still and sweet
  Shall fall for Mary's heart to keep
  Until her death-hour on her creep—
    Sing soft, the Eve of Mary!

Nora Hopper.

Sleep, My Child

(Mary's Cradle Song)

See the maiden mother mild,
Bending o'er the wondrous child!
Is it blessedness or pain,
Joy the heart can scarce contain?
Sleep, my child, nor dream of ill.

Could she with the sacred seers
Pierce the secret of the years,
Would a mother's yearning pray
That the cup might pass away!
Sleep, my child, nor dream of ill.

Hear the cradle-song she sings
To the lowly King of kings:
"Sweetly sleep, O son of mine,
Mystery of Love divine!
Sleep, my child, nor dream of ill.

"Hope of all the ages, thou,
Ne'er may trouble cloud thy brow!
Sweet the pain my heart doth thrill,
Sleep, my child, nor dream of ill,
Sleep, my child, nor dream of ill."

Stephen Glover.

The Virgin's Cradle Hymn

Dormi, Jesu! mater ridet
Quae tam dulcem somnum videt
Dormi, Jesu! blandule!

Si non dormis, mater plorat
Inter fila cantans orat,
  Blande, veni, somnule.

Sleep, sweet babe! my cares beguiling:
Mother sits beside thee smiling:
  Sleep, my darling, tenderly!
If thou sleep not, mother mourneth,
Singing as her wheel she turneth,
  Come, soft slumber, balmily!

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Translator).

The Virgin's Cradle Song

(Words from the Latin, Third Century)

Hush, my babe, oh, sleep! thy mother
  Sings to thee her sweetest lays:
Sleep, my son! hear'st thou thy father
  Chant to thee a hymn of praise?
"Praises shall all nations give thee:
  Praises, thousand, thousandfold."

Sleep, my heart, sleep: thou my gladness,
  Thou my throne, oh! thou my crown!
Music of angelic sweetness
  Seems to float from heaven down.
"Praises shall all nations give thee:
  Praises, thousand, thousandfold."

I will strew thy crib with violets,
  O'er thee shower roses red:

Hyacinths and fragrant lilies
Shall waft perfume round thy bed.
"Praises shall all nations give thee;
Praises, thousand, thousandfold."

Christmas Eve

Oh, hush thee, little Dear-my-Soul,
The evening shades are falling,—
Hush thee, my dear, dost thou not hear
The voice of the Master calling?

Deep lies the snow upon the earth,
But all the sky is ringing
With joyous song, and all night long
The stars shall dance, with singing.

Oh, hush thee, little Dear-my-Soul,
And close thine eyes in dreaming,
And angels fair shall lead thee where
The singing stars are beaming.

A shepherd calls his little lambs,
And he longeth to caress them;
He bids them rest upon his breast,
That his tender love may bless them.

So hush thee, little Dear-my-Soul,
Whilst evening shades are falling,
And above the song of the heavenly throng
Thou shalt hear the Master calling.

Eugene Field.

CHRISTMAS TIDE

Sleep, Holy Babe!
Upon Thy Mother's breast.
Great God of earth, and sea, and sky,
How sweet it is to see Thee lie
In such a place of rest!

Sleep, Holy Babe!
Thine angels watch around:
All bending low with folded wings,
Before th' Incarnate King of kings,
In reverend awe profound.

Sleep, Holy Babe!
While I with Mary gaze
In joy upon that face awhile,
Upon the loving infant smile,
Which there divinely plays.

Sleep, Holy Babe!
Ah! take Thy brief repose:
Too quickly will Thy slumbers break,
And Thou to lengthened pains awake,
That death alone shall close.

E. Caswall.

Sleep, baby, sleep! The Mother sings:
Heaven's angels kneel and fold their wings.
Sleep, baby, sleep!

With swathes of scented hay Thy bed
By Mary's hand at eve was spread.
Sleep, baby, sleep!

At midnight came the shepherds, they
Whom seraph wakened by the way.
Sleep, baby, sleep!

And three kings from the East afar,
Ere dawn came, guided by the star.
Sleep, baby, sleep!

They brought Thee gifts of gold and gems,
Pure Orient pearls, rich diadems.
Sleep, baby, sleep!

But Thou who liest slumbering there,
Art King of kings, earth, ocean, air.
Sleep, baby, sleep!

Sleep, baby, sleep! The shepherds sing;
Through heaven, through earth, hosannas ring.
Sleep, baby, sleep!

John Addington Symonds.

Luther's Cradle Hymn

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay—
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Christmas Tide

Cradle Song of the Virgin

The Virgin stills the crying
Of Jesus sleepless lying;
And singing for His pleasure
Thus calls upon her Treasure:
My Darling, do not weep,
My Jesu, sleep!

O Lamb, my love inviting,
O Star, my soul delighting,
O Flower of mine own bearing,
O Jewel past comparing!
My Darling, do not weep,
My Jesu, sleep!

My Child, of might indwelling,
My Sweet, all sweets excelling,
Of Bliss the Fountain flowing,
The Day-Spring ever glowing.
My Darling, do not weep,
My Jesu, sleep!

Old Latin.

Twilight falling, baby, weary,
Ceased its laughter and its play,
Nestled to the heart most loving,
That doth o'er it ever pray:
"Baby darling, angels guard thee,
Treasure of our heart and home,
May they hold thee in their keeping,
Ne'er in devious paths to roam!"

CHRISTMAS STUDIES

Angels guarding baby's slumber,
  Here from highest heaven above,
Once ye came, a countless number,
  Round a babe in heavenly love;
As ye gather by this cradle,
  Are your thoughts of long ago,
When on fair Judea's hillside
  Shepherds whispered soft and low?

Hark! your Song celestial ringing,
  "Peace on earth, to men good-will!"
Through the ages still goes singing,
  Echoes through the heavens still!
And the Star still sheds its splendor,
  As it gleamed before you then,
While, their gifts of Christmas bringing,
  Countless Wise Men throng your ken.

Shirley Telford.

New Year's Eve

Only a night from old to new;
Only a sleep from night to morn;
The new is but the old come true;
Each sunrise sees a new year born.

Helen Hunt Jackson.

Christmas Tide

The great bell of time is striking. Another year is nearly gone, another milestone on life's journey, another stage of our race for the goal. Let the past go. The retrospect is gloomy, at the best. Its memory brings pain and discouragement. We want all that is hopeful for the future. We ring bells for the new; we do not toll out our mournful ding-dongs over the old. Let our hearts reciprocate the sentiment of Tennyson's New Year bells:

"Ring out the old, ring in the new,"
"Ring out the false, ring in the true,"
"Ring in the Christ that is to be."

Selected.

Still on—as silent as a ghost!
Seems but a score of days, all told,
Or but a month or two at most,
Since our last New Year's song we trolled,
And lo! that New Year now is Old.
And here we stand to say "Good-by!"
Brief words—and yet, we scarce know why,
They bring a moisture to the eye,
And to the heart some quakes and aches;
We speak them very tenderly,
With half a sob and half a sigh—
"Old Year, good-by! Old Year, good-by!"

W. H. Burleigh.

New Year's Day

"Where do the New Years come from?"
Says Grandpa, looking away
Through the frosty rime on the window,
To the distant hills, so gray.
"They come from the country of youth, I know,
And they pass to the land of long ago."

Emily Huntington Miller.

CHRISTMASSA TUDA

Carry into the new year only the choicest thoughts and inspirations. As in the olden days when men approached the Parthenon they cleansed their persons and arrayed themselves in white robes before entering that glorious temple, so cleanse your garments from transgression, clothe yourself with aspirations. Farewell to the past! Welcome and all hail to the future!

Newell Dwight Hillis.

The new year also reminds us of opportunities for usefulness, which have come and gone, and of unfulfilled resolutions which have only blossomed to fade; shall this year also be as those which have gone before?

Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

The man who does not at least propose to himself to be better this year than he was last, must be either very good or very bad indeed! and only to propose to be better, is something; if nothing else, it is an acknowledgment of our need to be so, which is the first step toward amendment.

Charles Lamb.

Who comes dancing over the snow,
His soft little feet all bare and rosy?
Open the door, though the wild winds blow,
Take the child in and make him cosy.
Take him in and hold him dear,
He is the wonderful New Year.

Dinah Mulock Craik.

"What was I sayin'? Ah, about th' New Year. I welcome it, mind ye, but it's like anny new customer. I won't give it much credit. Th' pitcher papers have pitchers iv th' New Year as an innocent, prattlin' child, but don't ye believe it. Th' New Year is a grown-up Son iv th' old year an' has been thurly coached befure comin' in. Ye can't fool him. He's a dark, mysteervous sthranger, with a slouched hat pulled over his eyes, an' something that looks like a knife up his sleeve. I'm goin' to be as socvable to him as I can. He may be a nice fellow. But I've had a lot iv expeeryence with th' years, an' I've seen what they've done to some iv me frinds. This fellow may be all right, but he may have designs on th' cash dhrawer or me life, an' I think I'll watch him."

Mr. Dooley.

New Year's Calls

Perhaps the only distinct Dutch custom that afterwards came into widespread use in the United States, though now discontinued, was the New Year calls of the gentlemen on their lady friends.

* * * But the main thing to be accomplished on New Year's Day was a certain number of calls made on one hand, and a certain number received on the other. That being the game, why not play it and compare notes? So the young man who came in and said, "Happy New Year! Lovely day, isn't it? Do you think the custom is dying out? Yes, this is my twenty-fifth call. Jack Bullard and I are going to make fifty, and we'll really have to be going. Thanks, I believe I will; I remember your lemonade. Good-by. Happy New Year!" seemed to live up to the requirements of the day.

* * * Grandmother had pronounced views as to the morality of serving anything of an intoxicating nature on New Year's

Day—as she said, "It would not matter if ours were the only house visited, but when a man sets out to call on fifty people, and takes a little wine at each house, he is none the better for it; and besides it is a poor example for young men and a bad beginning for the new year."

Charles Battell Loomis.

A New Year's Meditation

The earth was brown and bare and cold;
Another year had swiftly rolled
Its twelve months round, and as its life went out, it seemed
To bring to mind all the fond hopes that man had dreamed,
Which in the waking never were fulfilled—
Every disappointment that had chilled
A single heart; every broken vow
Each day had known; and now
The year was going, with bowed and heavy head;
The whole earth sad,
And nature, too, seemed dead.

The heavens looked with pity on the earth below,
And, to hide its desolation, sent the snow.
All that long night the soft white flakes were whirled,
And when the morning came, their innocence and purity
had clothed the world.
A bright New Year had dawned, which did not know
The sin and sadness that had come a year ago.
The past was covered: God had sent this untried year
to give
Another chance to man, that he might wake and hope and
live.

Selected.

Twelfth Night

Three kings the King of kings three gifts did
bring—
Myrrh, incense, gold,—as to Man, God, and
King.
Three holy gifts be likewise given by thee
To Christ, even such as acceptable be:
For myrrha, tears; for frankincense, impart
Submissive prayers; for pure gold, a pure heart.

Old Twelfth Night Carol.

Christmas Tide

Twelfth in number of days after Christmas, January 6th is the climax of the season's festivities. Popularly known as Twelfth Night, this date is ecclesiastically described as the Feast of the Epiphany, so called from a Greek word meaning manifestation, as it commemorates the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles, and marks the anniversary of the journey of the Three Wise Men from the East, who were guided by a bright star to the birthplace of the Infant Saviour.

* * * * * * *

In its character as a popular festival, Twelfth Day stands only inferior to Christmas. Down to the time of the civil wars in England, the feast was observed with great splendor, not only at court, but at the inns of law, and the universities, as well as in private mansions and smaller households.

* * * * * * *

In both England and France, it was the custom to provide a large cake with a bean inserted, which was divided among the family and friends by lot, and whoever got the piece containing the bean was elected king or queen for the day.

* * * * * * *

The modern Twelfth Night cake usually has hidden within it a coin, a ring and a thimble. The coin indicates wealth, the ring wedded happiness or marriage within the year, and the thimble single blessedness.

Selected.

When the Star in the East came and stood over where the young Child was, and looked in on the Bethlehem stable, it was the beginning of a reconciliation which should bring rest to the world.

Bishop Huntington.

The Star Song

Tell us, thou clear and heavenly tongue,
Where is the Babe but lately sprung?
Lies He the lily banks among?

Or say, if this new Birth of ours
Sleeps, laid within some ark of flowers,
Spangled with dew-light: thou canst clear
All doubts, and manifest the where.

Declare to us, bright Star, if we shall seek
Him in the morning's blushing cheek,
Or search the beds of spices through,
To find Him out?

Star.—No, this ye need not do,
But only come and see Him rest,
A princely Babe, in's mother's breast.

Robert Herrick.

The Christmas Spectrum

Seven points hath the Christmas star:
One is the love that shines afar
From God to man; and one is the love
That leaps from the world to the Lord above;
And one is good-will on the happy earth;
And one is purity, one is peace,
And two are the joys that never cease,—
God's joy,
Man's joy,—
Aflame in the star of the wonderful Birth.

And the light of God's love is a golden light,
And man's love to man is crimson bright,
And man's love to God is an azure ray,—
Alas! when it flickers and dies away!
And the seven rays through the worshiping night
Like the flash of all jewels exult and play,—
God's joy,
Man's joy,—
Yet they shine as one, and the star is white.

Amos R. Wells.

Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night"

The earliest reference to Shakespeare's delightful comedy, "Twelfth Night," is found in a manuscript diary of one John Mannington, a member of the Middle Temple, London, which is preserved in the British Museum. The passage reads thus:—February 2, 1601—"At our feast wee had a play called Twelve Night, or What You Will."

* * * * * * *

What a scene do these few plain words call up before us! The Christmas festivities have lingered on till Candlemas. The Lord of Misrule has resigned his sceptre; the Fox and the Cat have been hunted round the hall; the Masters of the Revels have sung their songs; the drums are silent, which lent their noisy chorus to the marshal's proclamation. * * * But there is still a feast; and after the dinner a play, and that play Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night."

And the actual roof under which the happy benchers, barristers and students first listened to that joyous and exhilarating play, full of the truest and most beautiful humanities, especially fitted for a season of cordial mirthfulness, is still standing;

and we may walk into that stately hall and think — Here Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" was acted in the Christmas of 1601.

Charles Knight.

See, from far, upon the eastern road,
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet.

John Milton.

They leave the land of gems and gold,
The shining portals of the East;
For Him, the woman's seed foretold,
They leave the revel and the feast.

To earth their sceptres they have cast,
And crowns by kings ancestral won;
They track the lonely Syrian waste,
They kneel before the Babe new-born.

O happy eyes that saw Him first;
O happy lips that kissed His feet;
Earth slakes at last her ancient thirst;
With Eden's joy her pulses beat!

Aubrey de Vere.

They laid their offering at His feet:
The gold was their tribute to a King;
The frankincense, with its odor sweet,
Was for the Priest, the Paraclete;
The myrrh for the body's burying.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Wassailing the Trees

Twelfth Night Eve, or "Wassail Eve," as it is sometimes called, is a rustic festival in England, and one of the customs observed was that of wassailing the trees to ensure their future fruitfulness.

"Wassail the trees, that they may beare
You many a plum, and many a peare:
For more or less fruits they will bring
As you do give them wassailing."

As late as the eighteenth century, it is stated that in certain parts of Devonshire "the farmer, attended by his workmen, with a large pitcher of cider, goes to the orchard on this evening; and, there encircling one of the best bearing trees, they drink the following toast three times:—

"Here's to thee, old apple tree!
Whence thou mayst bud, and whence thou mayst blow!
And whence thou mayst bear apples enow!
Hats full! caps full!
Bushel, bushel—sacks full!
And my pockets full too!—Huzza!"

"Some," it is added, "are so superstitious as to believe that if they neglect this custom the trees will bear no apples that year."

L'Envoi

Come to us, Christmas, good old day,
Soften us, cheer us, say your say
To hearts which thrift, too eager, keeps
In bonds, while fellow-feasting sleeps.
Good Christmas, whom our children love,
We love you, too! Lift us above
Our cares, our fears, our small desires!
Open our hands and stir the fires
Of helpful fellowship within us,
And back to love and kindness win us!

Edward Sandford Martin.

Here endeth Christmasse Tyde, being a collection of Seasonable Quotations chosen and arranged by Jennie Day Haines, with decorations by Spencer Wright, and a Frontispiece in color by Gordon Ross. The typography designed by J. H. Nash. Published by Paul Elder and Company. Printed upon Normandy Vellum at the Tomoye Press, in New York City, Nineteen Hundred and Seven

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